

TESTIMONY ON H.B. 5037
AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE
BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30 2023

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 24, 2022

To the esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Tom Fiorentino. I live in West Hartford with my wife Shelagh McClure and my 31 year old son, Dan. Dan has an intellectual disability.

You will hear from others that Connecticut's social safety net is imploding. That is painfully true. But it omits is any mention of responsibility for that implosion.

Like many manmade disasters, the responsibility is shared. But a large part of the responsibility belongs to the State of Connecticut, the entity that created the privatized social safety net in an effort to both cut costs and, to be fair, expand services.

The costs of services were in fact dramatically cut; cut without regard to fairness, equity, or longterm sustainability of the workforce. And now, by failing to pay them anything close to what they deserve, those historically underpaid and under-appreciated workers are leaving.

Their departure has left thousands of desperate individuals served by both nonprofit providers and independent direct care workers, scrambling to find the workers they need to make it through the day.

The fact that the Governor's budget failed to address this problem is perplexing. It is like the fire department driving by a block of burning buildings and failing to notice they are on fire. Trust me-

trust the thousands of people desperately trying to find workers- those buildings are on fire.

You can begin to remedy the injustice of systematically underpaying these vital workers, and you can begin to mitigate the resulting damage to the thousands of people who rely on those workers, by appropriating sufficient funds to salvage the system. I urge you to do so.